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Paternalistic Benevolence – Enabling Violence: Teaching the Hegemonic Language in a Double Bind

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Abstract

The transnational empirical project zooms in on ‘German language classrooms’ and the teachers’ task of dealing with the double bind between ‘the need to teach the German language for the empowerment of the learners’ on the one hand and the consequent ‘reproduction of the hegemonic norm of a monolingual society’ on the other. The teachers in the focus of the project work for institutes of adult education with learners who are migrants and refugees living in Germany or Austria. The results show how teachers frame their work through two central positions. The first can be framed as ‘paternalistic benevolence’ and the second as ‘enabling violence’. The latter corresponds to a critical stance reflecting on the harm done in learning spaces while still being inevitable in nation-states that construct themselves as monolingual unities. Pedagogical professionals looking for a responsible path that reduces the violence done to a minimum will discover interesting reflections on the possibilities of how to find an always uncertain and contradictory place in the interstices.

Keywords: German language classroom; migration; enabling violence, paternalism, double bind

Introduction

Forced migration caused by the necessity to leave the home-country due to war, poverty, natural disasters or other life-threatening dangers is and continues to be one of the most important challenges nation-states have to deal with. Nation-states in general are genuinely based on an ‘idea’ of a more or less homogeneous community, linked by culture and language – imaged communities (cf. Anderson, 2016). As a result of migration flows,

receiving societies like Germany and Austria have the chance to question and reframe their 'norm(alitie)s', their traditions and their concepts of 'identity'. By taking this chance, they could develop themselves further and find new concepts concerning who they are and who they want to be in a globalized world divided by social disparities. However, instead of seizing the opportunity as such, fears and uncertainties are spread by a nationalist discourse. By constructing the migrants as 'the other' (Said, 2009), as threatening and alien, it is not cohesion in society that is being promoted, but division. The concept of 'integration' plays an active part in this division. It is part of a dispositive (cf. Gordon & Foucault, 1980, 194ff) answering to an artificially constructed 'emergency', reassuring the populations of the receiving countries that they do not have to be afraid of losing their own hegemonic position - referred to as national identity - in society (cf. Mecheril, 2011). The discourse on integration is a disciplining one-sided discourse putting the new-comers into the position of having to adjust to the given rules, language and values, ignoring the chance to develop and change as a society as a whole. One central part of the integration discourse in Germany and Austria is the system of the German courses for adult migrants. Most of these courses are state-funded, while others are conducted by volunteers who take on this job for a variety of reasons, including 'the will to shape the society' and 'feeling the responsibility to help' (Karakayali & Kleist, 2015, 31f). Talking to teachers in German language classrooms and doing research on their very difficult and precarious task of teaching marginalized people in a racist societal structure is ambivalent at the very least. Should it not be the state and its insidious, complex migration regime that is the focus of research, instead of shedding light on those who work in precarious conditions as language teachers and do their least bit to support migrants and refugees in many different ways? The answer to this question is simultaneously yes and no.

Nearly half a century ago, Louis Althusser (1971, p. 227) analysed how labour power in the context of capitalist societies is reproduced and reinsured not 'on the job', but increasingly *outside* production, inter alia the education system. It follows that while teaching German as the dominant language, state-funded adult education organisations and NGOs reaffirm present hegemonic ideas and intentions. Thus, these organisations can be identified as an inherent part of the educational institutions that secure the hegemonic structures within their work. As Foucault, a scholar of Althusser, was able to show in his lectures on 'Security, Territory, Population' (2017), self-government, anchored in the individual, is inextricably linked and an indispensable condition for the working of the whole complex system of power. Hence the individual practices of teachers in the classroom, the attitude they take towards their work and learners, and their engagement with the integration discourse can be used as a magnifying glass to better understand how the systems and mechanisms of power are related to each other.

This is why the project, which will be further presented in this article, zooms in on German language classrooms and talks to teachers and course organisers, learning more about their perceptions and attitudes and their daily practices in the classroom. Following the arguments of critical pedagogy, we assume that a critical examination of power relations must be part of the development of pedagogical professionalism. For teachers this means being highly reflective about their engagement with the integration discourse and being aware of their difficult task of dealing with the double bind between 'the need to teach the German language for the empowerment of the learners' on the one hand and the consequent 'reproduction of the hegemonic norm of a monolingual society' on the other.

We will start by briefly presenting the project and then elaborate on two of the central teacher attitudes that were found in the interviews: 'paternalistic benevolence' and

‘enabling violence’ (Spivak, 2008). Both these terms will be explained further in the respective sections. Concluding, we make references to the possibilities of how to find interstitial spaces in the conflicted and ambivalent spaces of teaching a hegemonic language.

The project – the German classroom re-visited

The transnational project ‘Please, become as we would like to be! – German Courses in Germany and Austria between Disciplining and Empowering’ presented in this article gathered data in Austria and in Germany (2015-2018) (cf. Heinemann, 2018a, 2018b). The full data set includes three different forms of data material a) field notes from 18 participatory observations in German classrooms following the indications of critical ethnography, b) guideline-based interviews with 18 teachers and course organising professionals, and c) a criteria-based selection of state accredited teaching materials. The whole data set is analysed using the Viennese Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Wodak & Meyer, 2016) method, which is theoretically grounded in the Critical Theory (Frankfurt School). The main research question focuses on analysing how normalisation processes forming ‘adjusted subjects’ to the hegemonic norm are reproduced and stabilised through the system of the German courses. Given that one part of the research focuses on how discourses influence the content of the courses as well as the classes’ dynamics, CDA in combination with critical ethnography seem to be useful methods not only to analyse the formation of subjects, but also to show the ideological impact on the course structure and content. The attitudes and practices of educational professionals (teachers and organisers) are analysed under this broad perspective, which intertwines discourse and the concrete practice in the class-room.

The following article will discuss just one specific excerpt of the data set, namely the results which are based on the interview data with teachers, gathered during the peak of refugee flight movements into the centre of Europe 2015-2016. The teachers surveyed during the project work in institutes for adult education with learners who are migrants and refugees living in Germany or Austria respectively. 10 of them work in government-funded classes, 8 are volunteers. Data gathered in the nation-states of Austria and Germany are analysed in one corpus of data. The German (83 M residents 2020) discourses have a significant impact on the Austrian (9 M residents in 2020) discourses that revolve around language, migration and integration, and discourses in general are not bound to man-made national borders. Therefore, a separate analysis of the data is not reasonable.

The analysis of the data is complete and we want to use this article to elaborate especially on the pedagogical challenge for teachers working with adult learners, who are marginalised in society in many ways. In the scientific field of adult education in Germany and Austria, there is a common understanding that the teacher-student relationship should be one of equal partners, participation should be voluntary and that it is not about educating adults like you educate children, but about sharing knowledge and opening rooms for ‘Bildung’, widening the possibilities and scopes of action. The 3rd Global Report on Adult Learning and Education adds ‘(e)ducation is vital for human rights and dignity, and is a force for empowerment (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2016, p. 8)’. The German classrooms – especially those which are offered by government-financed institutions - do not meet these policies in any regard. Migrants are forced to visit the courses or else face sanctions, their participation is monitored closely, and the power disparity between teacher and student makes learning on an equal footing

impossible. Last but not least, the idea of ‘Bildung’ is replaced by an economic idea of preparing the students to enter the job market in low positions where they just need basic German knowledge (B1/B2) and work under vulnerable conditions. Even though the general conditions in courses led by volunteers are different to those working in institutions, the disciplining discourse on integration affects every society member and therefore all teachers. They find different ways to deal with it. In the following, we will first present the highly problematic stance of ‘paternalistic benevolence’ found in most of the interviews, and second a critical reflective stance which we call ‘enabling violence’ in reference to Spivak (2008).

Paternalistic Benevolence

One of the most common frameworks within which the interviewed teachers are acting in the German language classrooms is the stance we have coined ‘paternalistic benevolence’. After introducing the phenomenon of paternalism in general, we will analyse the basic paternalistic figure against the backdrop of the present ‘integration discourse’. We will then identify incidents of ‘paternalistic benevolence’ in the adult education classrooms from the data and contextualise them in the field of critical adult education.

The concept of paternalism can be basically described as an “interference of a state or an individual with another person, against their will, and defended or motivated by a claim that the person interfered with will be better off or protected from harm” (Dworkin, 2017). In the

‘The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy’ Dworkin defines it as when ‘1. Z (or its omission) interferes with the liberty or autonomy of Y. 2. X does so without the consent of Y. 3. X does so only because X believes Z will improve the welfare of Y (where this includes preventing his welfare from diminishing), or in some way promote the interests, values, or good of Y’.

The nature of paternalism to act against another person’s will, by deciding something without conscious consent, is one of the main aspects Gramsci has outlined again and again in his prison notebooks. How is consent organised so that the ruled ones confirm and agree to their oppressions and controls, and how is this linked to the reaffirmation and stabilisation of the hegemonic ideas and structures (cf. Gramsci, 1992, p. 153). Every time the teachers in the classrooms (re)construct the learner as a ‘not-educated’, ‘not-knowing’ person, they infantilise the learners and simultaneously subjectify the position of the migrant as the *person in need*. Through the repetition of these actions, teachers within the present societal frameworks strengthen the hegemonic structures: ‘Cultural hegemony is based on the (re)creation of cultural, moral and mental mindsets of a society (...) Pedagogical ideas and concepts are self-evident parts of constructing, consolidation but also of erosion of hegemony as the practical pedagogy, which enables through ‘Bildung’ and education the absorption of culture at all (Bernhard, 2005, p. 120)’.

By zooming in on the classrooms, we could identify a stance, which we want to coin ‘paternalistic benevolence’ based on the principal conditions of paternalism as listed by Gerald Dworkin. We will analyse how these conditions are argued and acted upon throughout the interviews.

Adult educators in German language classrooms in Germany and Austria are confronted with the force of the hegemonic ‘integration discourse’, which is very much connected to the fear that the national welfare-system could break down, security and prosperity is at risk, and finally that the nation-state is itself in danger (cf. Mecheril 2011).

Based on this fear, migrants and refugees are constructed as a threat and a disturbance, who have to be regulated and got under control (cf. Mecheril & van der Haagen-Wulff 2016, p. 121). Teachers, working inside this hegemonic ideology, are therefore pressured to ‘integrate’ new migrants and refugees as fast and efficiently as possible. If they go with the discourse and are not opposed to it in some way, they can portray themselves as good helpers towards the ‘new-comers’ on the one hand and as rescuers of the nation-state on the other. They don’t just feel pleased to support the migrants learning proper German, but also have an idea ‘of the greater good’ as they play their part in the ‘integrating process’. Therefore, they neither question their own role in the migration regime nor the hegemonic status of the German language. Instead they imagine themselves helping the constructed ‘needy’ migrant who still has to learn the right rules, language and values to adjust and become a ‘good German/Austrian’, and not to disturb the hegemonic norm in any way. To underline this argument, we want to draw attention to one subject that comes up quite regularly in the interviews – the prototype of the ‘homophobic migrant’. One teacher reports how she deals with this issue in the classroom: ‘Sorry, but perhaps you should go and live in Saudi-Arabia or Iraq, there they have the death-sentence for this. But if you want to live here, you need to know our constitution, our fundamental and human rights. You have to respect them. Whether you like it or not (GH, Pos. 424)’. Even though we completely support and understand the concern of the teacher not to respect homophobic talk inside the classroom and her_his well-meaning idea of teaching the ‘politically correct’ stance for living in Germany/Austria, it is interesting that being homophobic is put together with the right to live ‘here’ in this nation state and knowing ‘our constitution’. Unfortunately, there are many homophobic Germans and Austrians who were born and brought up inside the nation-state, who don’t care about ‘our/their’ constitution at all. But no one questions their right to exist inside the national borders. Hence the teacher’s action towards the participants is part of her stance of paternalistic benevolence. By rebuking the homophobic expression with a general verbal expulsion from the nation-state, she wants ‘the best’ for her students, helping them to adjust to the rules of the receiving country. At the same time, she ‘disciplines’ them against the background of a disciplining integration discourse.

Addressing the learner as a person in need, lacking language competence and self-organised learning skills, offers legitimisation for all kind of paternalistic actions in the classrooms and leads to harmful actions towards the learners, but always – and this is crucial for the understanding of the paternalistic practices – with a benevolent intention. Another example we want to give is one repeated quite commonly throughout the interview data. This entails a stance towards the learners based on the strong belief that the acting person would know what’s best for the other person and therefore not ask for conscious consent. ‘Because I have mainly untrained and uneducated learners (so called ‘Lernungewohnte’) and therefore I *force* them to always write side notes in their mother tongue. What does this or that mean, because they wouldn’t do that on their own, [...]’ [KK 57-59, transl. SAS] The interviewee stresses the necessity of forcing the learners to use a method of which s_he is convinced. A more appropriate approach in the framework of adult educational pedagogy would be to develop a range of methods together with the group, so that the learners could explore and practice different kinds of methods and then individually choose their own ones voluntarily. Instead, the teacher assumes they are not able to develop their own skills, are not able to explore and choose on their own, and moreover believes that forcing them for their own good is the best method.

Another teacher argues in a similar way. S_he is talking about her_his well-meaning and interesting approach to include different forms of teaching methods and reports on one of her_his strategies: ‘And then I forced them to write poems [GH 285, transl. AH].’

Throughout the process of infantilisation, decisions are made for learners and they are reduced to persons with deficits and lacks of knowledge. Hence, in this case, the teacher doesn't explain and motivate the group to join the experience in trying out different forms of writing, but 'forces' them into writing poems. Even though the outcome might be good, addressing adults in a paternalistic way - forcing them instead of explaining – leaves its traces in the subjectivation process of the learners.

As Peter Ives points out following Gramsci: '[T]he central dynamic of 'hegemony' explain[s] how 'consent' is constructed in such a manner that does not define it as the opposite of, or the lack of, coercion, but rather the relation or structuring of coercion and consent (Ives, 2010, p. 92)'. Forcing the learners to use a certain method of learning, disciplining them to do so, is always combined with a benevolent stance which builds the connection for getting the students' consent. For many migrants in the first months after arriving in the receiving country, German class teachers are often the only 'German' or 'Austrian' person they work and speak with regularly. This means that the teachers also become a central part in their emotional connection to the receiving country. One of the students reflects on the relationship, and how he experiences it, quite directly: "G [the teacher] is our Mum and she brought us up in this foreign country (B 1)".

As we were able to reconstruct by analysing the interviews, forced actions, orders and humiliating speech-acts are argued and authorised by the teachers against the background of a disciplining integration discourse, which again is rooted in a long history of capitalist states that are established on the foundation of deeply racist societies (cf. Balibar, 2017; Hall, 1992; hooks, 2000). 'Paternalistic benevolence' is therefore grounded on the idea of being superior, of knowing better and more, presupposing 'the other' knows less. Furthermore, paternalistic benevolent actions are linked with the concept of empowerment in a complex and contradictory way, which is itself deeply rooted in the era of the Enlightenment and in this way to the colonial civilising mission. Following Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's critical thoughts towards the Enlightenment in which the white man decides and distributes rights, justice and knowledge to the weaker ones, with the grand gesture of benevolence and generosity towards those who are in need and receiving without being able to empower themselves, we could state: 'All benevolence is colonial (Spivak, 2007, p. 176)'. The 'civilizing mission', the approach to bring the Enlightenment to those who seem to live in the 'dark', was and *is* one of the most important legitimising discourses, when the imperial powers have to defend their invasions and oppressive economic politics (cf. Spivak, 1994). Empowerment and 'paternalistic benevolence' are therefore historically linked to each other on different layers: symbolically, culturally and economically. Keeping these complex interwoven historical layers in mind, which still constitute the relationship between the global 'West and the rest' (Hall, 2012), we will have a closer look at paternalistic benevolence and how this is connected to the western state.

As Althusser pointed out in his essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus' following Marx, every ruling class must battle for the reproduction of the conditions of the production in terms of the (capitalist) production, and these battles need obedient subjects (cf. Althusser, 2014 [1971], p. 203). Examples that he refers to include civil servants, workers in schools, and employees of the court system. In our focus, these obedient subjects include coordinators, administrative staff and teachers of German language classes who are reaffirming and reassuring the continuity of the present and established order. Althusser outlines the obedient attitude of subjects through the concept of interpellation or hailing with the following notorious example: a person on a street is called by a police officer 'Hey, you there!'. Feeling addressed s_he turns around. This one-hundred-and-eighty-degree turn at the moment of hailing is the moment of becoming

a subject or being subjected (Althusser, 2014 [1971], p. 190). It is the practice of repetition, the performative act of repeated interpellations itself in Althusser's concept, which Judith Butler later further developed criticising Althusser's belief in the simplicity of the interpellative function (cf. Sonderegger, 2014). Butler questions this simple form of subject formation drawn by Althusser on the street and calls for deviation and disobedience within the hailing moment. She focusses on the possible transformation in the returning and repetitive performative act within the moments of hailing. The simply constructed interpellation and response of Althusser can be interrupted, and responses of doubts and irritations can occur. As a consequence, this can lead to the person not turning around or turning only halfway, resisting the full subordination and subjectivation by the order which addresses her_him. In the context of our analysis, that would mean that teachers in the German classroom probably doubt the need to turn around one-hundred-and-eighty-degrees. Those who decide not to turn around at all, turn just a bit or at least hesitate to turn around in the full 180-degree-movement look for other ways of dealing with the double bind. A double-bind concerning the educator who wants to offer learning spaces which are empowering in an equal partnership with the adult learner on the one hand and the need to follow the state order to teach the hegemonic language (with state accredited materials) on the other. One of the frameworks that teachers refer to, to find a way in between – without naming it as such – is the concept of 'enabling violence'.

Enabling Violence

The term 'enabling violence' was coined by the postcolonial critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and means in short that sometimes the violence done to people, for example by forcing them to learn English in the colonial territory occupied by the English, or in our case German when living in a country where the majority speaks German, can be enabling in the long run: '(...) because there is the violation, one can also think about the ways in which one could undo the violation, or rather how to sustain the enablement with a minimum of violation (Spivak, 2007, p. 176)'. Especially, when the form of 'violence' leads to enabling the persons to resist the oppressor with the necessary tools, developing a voice which can be understood and listened to (cf. Spivak, 2008, p. 15).

And as a matter of fact, speaking and even understanding the hegemonic language opens certain doors and possibilities for the participants and widens their scope of action. At the same time, certain obstacles remain and are keeping doors shut. An example is the broken promise concerning the job market. In the current integration discourse, the demand to learn the national language is promoted by the promise that once the newcomers master it, they will be able to find a good job (and even German speaking friends) – the condition being that migrants speak the hegemonic language as good as any average citizen raised in Austria or Germany. This is a condition which can't be met by most of the migrants especially when they can't afford expensive German courses on a higher level or start learning German as an adult. However, according to this discourse, those who fail to master the national language will experience discrimination in the labour market as well as in everyday life, because they aren't able to communicate in a 'civilised manner'. Consequently, racist experiences become a personal matter. Some of the teachers interviewed try to find a reflective position in this excluding, racist and harmful discourse. Even though they know about the violence in the integration discourse and the course-system, they use different forms of enabling their students to cope with the restricting challenges they and the students face. Three of the most interesting strategies

will be elaborated further in more detail: the *strategy of dreaming*, the *strategy of providing a tool box* and the *strategy of telling counter-narratives*.

Within the realms of possibility, teachers with the attitude of ‘enabling violence’ follow the idea that dreams are one pathway to give strength and power even though they are restricted. The *strategy of dreaming* includes the idea that learning about language and the receiving country contributes to the learners’ possibilities to dream about their own professional future and future in general living in Germany/Austria. One of the interviewees affirms this for example: ‘Yes – and besides the language part, in this course one of my aims is to empower them to have vocational aims, or any goals, for their future, for their future here in Austria – even though it is a limited one anyway [Interview cw, 55-58, transl. AH]’. Reflecting the limitations, not forcing anyone to imagine anything that could lead to even more frustration - just to open up rooms for dreaming is a strategy deeply rooted in the approaches of critical education and can be very powerful when handled with care in the classroom (cf. Monzó, 2019, 239ff). The gained strength can support them to resist and counteract the hegemonic constrictions.

The second strategy we want to present is the *strategy of providing language as a tool-box*, even though Audre Lorde’s famous saying ‘the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house (Lorde, 2018)’ is mostly true in the context of the German course system, too. Nevertheless, the attitude of teaching German as a tool for self-empowerment, to become independent and to move around freely is different to the general discourse that follows the idea of learning enough German to find a job and to be an otherwise efficient, silent and inconspicuous part of society. Another quote which underlines our conclusions can be found again in the same interview: ‘Language is a lot about self-empowerment, because without language – here in Austria – language is just indispensable to realise all these things here now. [...] Language is very important for self-empowerment for most of them, not for all. [...] Just going out of the house and do this and that all on their own [Interview CW, 227-231, 235f transl. AH]’. It is interesting that the interviewee can not only differentiate that she is talking specifically about the Austrian context, but at the same time she knows that it is not true for all students that the learning of the language will be used as a tool for self-empowerment in the same way. Some have other ways and resources to reach their goals. Language is seen as just one tool among others. The teacher always has the context in mind and it is more about conveying tools/resources for the learners, which they can decide to use, then about teaching the language just because ‘they have to learn German, if they want to live here’. The appropriation and control of the dominant language could at least, as Spivak suggested, open pathways to resist the hegemonic structures and to develop a voice that is listened to.

The last strategy that will be presented here is the *strategy of telling counter-narratives*. Teachers following this strategy try to intervene in the hegemonic discourse by telling alternative stories whenever they find a space for it. They take ‘family – pictures’ of white, blond families in the German course book and ask the class to question what they see. They react to stories of discrimination not with dethematisation but with ideas on how to resist. It is not about conveying their own ideology to the classroom but - knowing that the learners are affected by the hegemonic discourse, too – giving space for other ideas of reality, again without force but as an opportunity to discuss and learn from each other. When talking about the experience of discrimination of the students during the interview, one teacher assures ‘I always bring this up. [...] And yes, I always say my opinion, which doesn’t have to be accepted [SM 381-387, translated AH]’. She shares her view, her opinion, her story on what happened but doesn’t expect the students to adopt the same opinion. She is sharing ideas on an equal footing, which of course has

its natural limitation when it comes to ‚opinions‘ that are discriminating to anyone or any group and therefore have to be classified as violence.

All three strategies are used by those teachers who do not turn around fully in Butler’s sense of the hailing moment but instead are performing a half turn. These teachers do not want to affirm and stabilise the hegemonic structures and therefore declare explicitly that they are critical of the German course system – especially when it comes to refugees - and search for ways to still act as partners to the students, even though their situation seems almost hopeless. Amidst all the given restrictions, they try to teach in these contradictory situations outlined above. Their strategies are based on the ‘*power of imagination*’, meaning that one has to be able to imagine a world in which it is possible to fulfil one’s dreams, use one’s tools to resist the hegemonic discourses and its effects, and to create other and new stories of reality.

Interstitial spaces – the power of imagination

For Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, working with the power of the imagination is one of the most important pedagogical tasks teachers have to concentrate on. It makes it possible to break the lines of reality, to think utopian, to invent oneself as someone different to the one you are today and visualize ‘things that are not in the here and now’. Furthermore, it triggers the ‘Spieltrieb’¹, Schiller’s tool to re-unite the formal and the material impulse in the human being. Spivak ab-uses² the concept of the ‘Spieltrieb’ to play with the double binds one is confronted with in the myriad ambiguous contexts of this world. Examples she refers to are the double bind between caste and class, race and class, body and mind, self and other (cf. Spivak, 2012b, VIIIIf). Aesthetic education, sabotaged in the Spivakian sense, is ‘play training’ for her, an epistemological preparation for democracy (cf. Spivak, 2012a, p. 4).

To not turn around or turn only half-way in Butler’s sense would be a corresponding condition for the training of the imaginative in terms of ethical interventions and it would interrupt the repeating practices of interpellation and response. Teachers working against the backdrop of ‘enabling violence’ should seek alternative possibilities to learn to live with the double bind, through half-way turning. These possibilities include for example intervening and interrupting within the cruelty of the hegemonic structures by producing alternative anti-hegemonial learning material, permanent questioning the frameworks of their jobs, the learning conditions and their links to residence and working permissions, and learning to sabotage the Enlightenment from below (Spivak, 2012a, p. 3) by radically questioning their own position, their shaky knowledge base from which some might feel superior – finally produce creative ways of anti-hegemonical speech-acts, training the imagination as Spivaks suggests. Henry Giroux elaborates on the responsibility of educators quite clearly: ‘Pedagogy is never innocent and if it is to be understood and problematized as a form of academic labor, educators must not only critically question and register their own subjective involvement in how and what they teach, they must also resist all calls to depoliticize pedagogy [...] Crucial to this position is the necessity for critical educators to be attentive to the ethical dimensions of their own practice (Giroux, 2017, p. 76)’.

Teachers can find orientation and inspiration to reflect on their own practice in the context of politically oriented art and arts education (Plessie 2020; Rajal, Marchart, Landkammer & Maier, 2020) or educational scientists who explicitly search for ways to decolonize the hegemonial educational practices. These could include - among many others - Antonia Darder (2009) and bell hooks (2010), who belong to the group of

scholars who put the ‘body’ in the center of teaching by engaging with the physical, emotional, and material conditions that are embedded in the process of living and learning. There are also scholars working on indigenous methodologies like McCoy, Tuck and McKenzie (2018), Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) and Margaret Elizabeth Kovach (2009) who are very inspiring when it comes to decolonizing one’s own educational practices. Other ways to find interstitial spaces inside the hegemonic structures can be found in the resisting self-reflexive educational practice of activists in critical adult education (cf. MAIZ, 2015), in the different practices of counter-publicity (cf. Kolb & Messner, 2019), the powerful strategies telling counter-narratives (cf. R. Anderson & Fluker, 2019; Anzaldúa, 2012; Thomas, 2018) or even the fictional empowering narratives found in (queer)feminist science-fiction literature (Le Guin, 2020; cf. Piercy, 2019). All these ideas can serve as hints for pedagogical professionals who are seriously searching for interstitial spaces in the hegemonic system. They need to develop and cultivate their power of imagination and they need courage, perseverance and— as the hegemonic system is constantly transitioning – constant flexibility to adapt to the new situations. It is then, however, that there is chance to take the responsibility towards the migrants and refugees in a respectful and supporting way. Even it is not possible to do everything ‘right’ – the very least educators can do is to follow Foucault’s art “of not being governed like that and at that cost” (Foucault, 1992 [1978], p. 12).

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Notes

¹‘There shall be a communion between the formal impulse and the material impulse, that is, there shall be a play instinct [Spieltrieb], because it is only the unity of reality with the form, of the accidental with the necessary, of the passive state with freedom, that the conception of humanity is completed (Schiller, 1794, p. 19)’.

²The notion ‘ab-use’ refers to Spivak’s form of affirmative sabotage. She suggests, that we learn to use the European Enlightenment from below (Spivak, 2012a, p. 3).

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